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JANUARY 11, 1979

Dear Senator Gravel:

I am writing to inform you that Korean opposition leader and former Presidential candidate Mr. Kim Dae Jung, about whom you have expressed concern in earlier correspondence, was released from custody on December 27. Mr. Kim's release, which came when the remainder of his five-year sentence was suspended as part of a sweeping grant of leniency to prisoners in connection with the inauguration of President Park for a fifth term, represents a major step forward in the area of human rights in Korea. In addition to Mr. Kim, 106 of the individuals released could be described as political prisoners.

First reports from our Embassy in Seoul indicate that Mr. Kim was kept busy his first few days of freedom, giving interviews to Korean and foreign newsmen and receiving literally hundreds of well-wishers and political figures. We have been told that Mr. Kim is in excellent health and that he has been told of no restrictions on his behavior or movement. Upon his release, Mr. Kim issued press releases in Korean, Japanese and English and told the press that he wished to look over the situation before undertaking future political party activity.

I assume that you may have heard the general outlines of these positive developments from press accounts or other sources but, on the basis of your previously expressed interest in Mr. Kim's case, I wanted to give you as full a picture as possible.

Sincerely,

Douglas J. Bennet, Jr.
Assistant Secretary for
Congressional Relations

The Honorable
Mike Gravel,
United States Senate.

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Clearances:EA/K:RGRich, Jr.
HA/HR:LEMorin for
EA - Ms. Chamberlain
H - [redacted] Kimmitt

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
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